

Agreement in Number

STUDENT OBJECTIVES

- Identify errors in subject-verb agreement, especially with helping verbs
- Correct errors in subject-verb agreement, especially with helping verbs

RESOURCES AND PREPARATION

You will need photocopies for students of:

- **Student Lesson Summary**, p. 25.
- **Practice Worksheets**, Levels A and B, pp. 27–28.
- **Reteaching Worksheet**, p. 29

Teach

1. **Basic Subject-Verb Agreement:** Distribute the **Lesson Summary** and preview the **Academic Vocabulary**, stressing that **singular** refers to *one*, and **plural**, more than one. Then write the following counterexample on the board:

INCORRECT EXAMPLE:

Dogs runs faster than humans.

- Call on a volunteer to identify the subject and verb. (subject: *dogs*; verb: *runs*)
 - Ask: which is singular and which is plural? (singular: *runs*; plural: *dogs*)
 - Explain that *both* subject and verb should be singular *or both* can be plural. Have a volunteer correct the error. (*Dogs run faster than humans.* or *A dog runs faster than a human.*)
 - Point out that mistakes in subject-verb agreement sound confusing and sloppy.
2. **Teaching Basic Subject-Verb Agreement:** Use the **Lesson Summary** to review the four steps students can take to correct sentence fragments in their writing, as follows:
 - **Number in the Subject:** Call on volunteers to define the **subject** of a sentence. (*The subject tells whom or what a sentence is about.*) Ask: Can a subject be more than one person or thing? (*Yes, it can be plural.*) Call on volunteers to give examples of **plural subjects**. (*Sample: Two sisters; My favorite things; All children; etc.*)
 - **Number in the Verb:** Have a volunteer read the examples in “Step 2.” Ask a student to identify the **singular verb** and the **plural verb**. Discuss the fact that nouns ending in *-s* are usually plural (*pets*), while verb forms ending in *-s* (*loves*) are usually singular. Brainstorm examples of plural nouns and verbs. Then examples of singular nouns and verbs.
 - **Helping Verbs:** Go through the examples in “Step 3,” making sure that students recognize the forms *has*, *is*, *does*, and *was* as singular. Point out that these like most other verbs, have singular forms ending in *-s*. Review the examples of plural helping verbs, especially *have*, *were*, *do*, and *are*.
 - **Helping Verbs in Contractions:** As you review “Step 4,” ask for examples of contractions combining subjects with helping verbs. As volunteers suggest examples, rewrite them as two words to be sure they are correct. (*Sample: Jenny’s*

AGREEMENT IN NUMBER , CONTINUED

= *Jenny is; I've = I have; they're = they are*) Then generate a similar list with contractions of helping verbs and *not*. (Sample: *isn't = is not; don't = do not*) Challenge students to generate sentences using these forms correctly. (Sample: *The cat isn't inside the house. The dogs haven't been fed yet.*)

QUICK CHECK. Write each sentence on the board. Ask students to explain what is wrong and to correct the error.

- Many animals hunts well. (Subject “animals” is plural; verb “hunts” is singular. Correction: Many animals **hunt** well.)
- A hawk possess natural hunting ability. (Subject “hawk” is singular; verb “possess” is plural. Correction: A hawk **possesses** natural hunting ability.)
- Cats doesn't seem to have become pets until about 1500 B.C. (Subject “cats” is plural, but contraction of the helping verb “doesn't” is singular. Correction: Cats **don't** seem to have become pets until about 1500 B.C.)

Practice and Apply

Practice activities involving subject-verb agreement appear on pp. 27–28.

- Assign **Practice Worksheet A** to students who need more structured activities.
- Assign **Practice Worksheet B** to grade-level or above-level students.

Answer Key: Practice Worksheet A

1. *Pets have been used for many purposes.*
2. *Many dogs are excellent hunters, for example.*
3. *With their sharp senses of smell and hearing, dogs make good guards.*
4. *Pets also help to eliminate animal pests.*
5. *For centuries, people have kept cats to catch rats and mice.*
6. *Some pets aren't maintained in the household, however.*
7. *C*
8. *Caged pets include rabbits, guinea pigs, gerbils, and hamsters.*
9. *Paddock pets such as horses and ponies have to be stabled outdoors.*
10. *Some people actually do keep insects as pets!*

Answer Key: Practice Worksheet B

1. *Recent studies have uncovered some interesting facts about pets.*
 2. *For many older people, pets seem to contribute to a healthier lifestyle.*
 3. *Pet owners suffer from less stress than do people without pets.*
 4. *C*
 5. *According to experts, pet ownership increases cooperation within families.*
- 6–12. *Archaeologists have discovered carvings and paintings of pets. These pictures are located in ancient tombs in Mesopotamia. The paintings show mastiff-like dogs in a lion hunt. In ancient Egypt, domestic pets were often shown in scenes of family life. Hunting dogs trot*

with their masters to the chase, and lap dogs sit under the chairs of their owners. Then, as now, the dog doesn't want to be far from its master.

Assess and Reteach

Use these guidelines to determine if students need the **Reteaching Worksheet**.

- **Practice Worksheet A:** Students should correctly answer nine out of items 1–10.
- **Practice Worksheet B:** Students should correctly answer at least four out of items 1–5, and six of items 6–12.

For students who need reteaching, review the **Lesson Summary**. Focus on the examples, and relate them to the definitions. Brainstorm one or two new examples with students for each step. Then have them complete the **Reteaching Worksheet**, p. 29.

Answer Key: Reteaching Worksheet

1. *From a distance, salamanders seem like small lizards.*
2. *However, these creatures are really amphibians with short bodies and long tails.*
3. *A salamander has glands in its skin with a slimy substance inside.*
4. *When under attack, salamanders ooze this slime.*
5. *C*
6. *Still others divide their time between land and water.*
7. *In very hot weather, salamanders are clever at finding damp places.*
8. *These creatures have developed with a strong need for water and moisture.*
9. *If they don't have water nearby, they will die.*
10. *What do salamanders eat? They feed on insects, worms, snails, and—sometimes—*
11. *other salamanders!*